

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2004

The Honorable Tom Ridge
Secretary
Department of Homeland Security
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Ridge:

As you know, we are continuing our investigation into how the U.S. Government is protecting the nation against the threat of nuclear or radiological attack. Specifically we have focused our attention on the deployment of radiation portal monitors at seaports, mail facilities, and border crossings because these devices can be used to effectively screen cargo for radiological and nuclear materials without slowing the flow of commerce.

This effort has been undertaken by the Bureau of Customs and Border Protection (CBP), under the Department of Homeland Security (DHS). CBP has a multi-phase plan to install portal monitors at designated ports of entry. The initial plan was to complete the entire installation by December 2005. While some progress has been made, considerable work remains and vulnerabilities still exist. (While we will not detail the specifics of our concerns here, a non-public attachment details our concerns further.) Under the current budget, it will be difficult, if not impossible, to meet this deadline, and we remain very concerned that this project will not receive all necessary funding.

The total cost of the project is estimated by your Department to be \$495.8 million. To date Congress has appropriated \$205.8 million to CBP for this program. In a recent meeting held with key CBP officials, staff was informed that available funding covers half of the program's phases. The Department of Homeland Security's fiscal year 2005 budget requests \$42.9 million for portal monitors. CBP staff has noted that this amount is \$247 million short of what is required to complete the installation by December 2005. According to key CBP officials significant portions of this funding is needed soon to keep this project on schedule.

Given the catastrophic impact of a major radiological or nuclear attack, these costs are comparatively trivial. We would advocate completing this project in fiscal year 2005. The failure to request these funds in your budget suggests that the Department will have significant difficulty meeting the December 2005 deadline. We would appreciate your response to the following questions about this program:

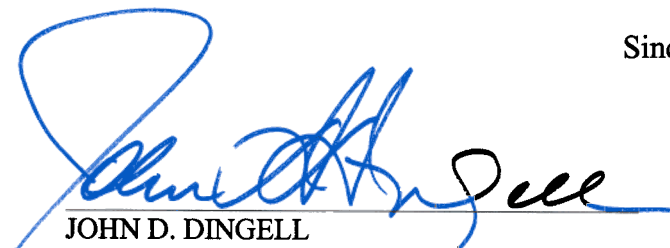
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- . Does the Department intend to reprogram funds from other programs to cover the balance of the program's costs? If so, please indicate which programs would be cut to make such funds available.
2. If no reprogramming of funds is anticipated, please indicate what would be the new targeted completion date for the project if the funding level remains unchanged?

Thank you for your attention to this request. If you have any questions on this matter please contact us, or have your staff contact Christopher Knauer of the Committee on Energy and Commerce Democratic staff at 202-226-3400 or Al Thompson of the Select Committee on Homeland Security Democratic staff at 202-226-2616.

Sincerely,



JOHN D. DINGELL
RANKING MEMBER
COMMITTEE ON ENERGY AND COMMERCE



JIM TURNER
RANKING MEMBER
SELECT COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND
SECURITY

cc: The Honorable Joe Barton, Chairman
Committee on Energy and Commerce

The Honorable Christopher Cox, Chairman
Select Committee on Homeland Security